

in excess of inferior recessive genes, such a reform would produce dysgenic results by keeping more of them alive. However we look on these questions, the need for immediately beneficial social reforms appears to me to emphasize the need for immediate action in the field of eugenics.

In conclusion I should like to add that I believe that the majority of biologists are now firm believers that natural selection has been at all events one of the main agents in the evolutionary process. I am, therefore, surprised to notice how seldom any efforts are made by these scientists to ensure that this knowledge shall be utilized in the endeavour to improve the qualities of mankind in the future. Their more active co-operation in the eugenic campaign would be highly appreciated.

LEONARD DARWIN.

Sussex.

Obstacles to Marriage

To the Editor, Eugenics Review

SIR,—Mr. Pear's interesting paper (October 1939, p. 161) makes no mention of one "obstacle to marriage" that certainly operates among a very large class in this country. This is the spread of the knowledge of contraceptives. It might be thought that this would encourage early marriages. It may do and probably does among a limited class, but among the mass of the people it seems to act the opposite way.

In that part of the country in which I live, it always has been and still is the custom for young men and women—I might call them older boys and girls—"to walk out" together. This arrangement is practically a betrothal and there is hardly ever an end to it except marriage. No limit is placed to the association and, as a Suffolk parson once said, "No girl in my parish marries until she is compelled." In days gone by nature soon took its course, the wedding bells rang and a long period of child-bearing ensued. Families of eight or ten were common and were brought up on ten to twelve shillings a week.

Nowadays, it is very different, as I will show by two examples. A young gardener whom I know, now just 29, only married two or three years ago, after "keeping company" with a girl for several years. Five months after the marriage a child was born. No more have followed and so far as I know none are on the way.

The second case is that of a maid who went into service four and a half years ago before she was 15. A year later she started "to walk out" but she is still in service and says openly that she has no intention of marrying at present. The young man who draws good wages is everywhere received as her future husband. Forty years ago she would have been married long ere now.

I believe that this custom of "keeping company" prevails not only in all rural areas in England but in the mining districts and probably

governs the incidence of marriage for a very large proportion of the population. In these circumstances a knowledge of contraceptives not only limits the family *after* marriage but actually operates to retard the ceremony for a number of years.

B. ABDBY COLLINS.

Deccan House,
Aldeburgh, Suffolk.

The Malthusian Doctrine

To the Editor, Eugenics Review

SIR,—Mr. R. H. Pear (EUGENICS REVIEW, October 1939, p. 161) says that "the grim prophecies of Malthus were not borne out by facts, mainly owing to the growth of international trade in food-stuffs which he did not foresee." The only grim prophecy which Malthus made was that so long as nations in the Old World had a high birth-rate so long would they have poverty and a high death-rate from food shortage. Notwithstanding the New World's big addition to the food supply, England continued to have a heavy mortality until the birth-rate was much reduced. The soundness of Malthus's doctrine is still clearly seen in India, China and every other country of high natality.

B. DUNLOP.

Manor Fields,
Putney, S.W.15.

Population and Employment

To the Editor, Eugenics Review

SIR,—In your October issue Mr. R. H. Pear says: "On one point there does seem to be agreement, namely that any diminution in the size of our population, far from curing unemployment, is likely to leave it as chronic as before."

The bare possibility of setting people to work is, of course, independent of the numbers of the population. The late Professor Cannan said: "Indefinite numbers can be employed if they do not ask for too high a remuneration." No economist ever questioned that, and Hitler has proved it to be true.

If, however, the problem to be solved is that of employing all competent workers at good wages, then all economists are agreed that that depends on the numbers seeking employment. Ricardo said: "Labour is dear when it is scarce and cheap when it is plentiful." Mr. J. M. Keynes says: "We could maintain a higher standard of life if we had fewer to employ and to feed" (*Economic Journal*, December 1923). Every major economist of the last hundred years has expressed the same opinion.

R. B. KERR.

335 Sydenham Road,
Croydon.